

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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S E C R E T LONDON 00630

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, MU, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH REACTION TO MASIRAH USE AND MILITARY  
SALES TO OMAN

REF: STATE 008369; LONDON 618

SUMMARY: BRITISH WILL STUDY OUR REQUEST FOR USE OF MASIRAH MAINLY FROM VIEWPOINT OF LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, THEY SAY, BUT ARE LIKELY TO COME TO USG SOON WITH QUERY AS TO EXACT MISSIONS FOR WHICH WE DESIRE THAT USE. HIGH-RANKING FCO OFFICIAL EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT CONCLUSION OF TOW SALE IN VIEW OF GENERAL UNDERSTANDING TO CONSULT WITH UK ON SUCH ITEMS IN ADVANCE, BUT HE APPEARED TO ACCEPT OUR EXPLANATION AND DID NOT PRESS. THIS IS SENSITIVE AREA IN US-UK RELATIONSHIP. FURTHER MOVES SUCH AS PROPOSED DOD STUDY MISSION TO OMAN SHOULD BE COORDINATED CLOSELY WITH BRITISH BOTH HERE AND IN OMAN. OMANI GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE NOT TO APPEAR SUBORDINATE TO BRITISH WILL OF COURSE COMPLICATE THE CONSULTATION PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. WE SAW FCO ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARY WEIR JANUARY 14 AND TALKED WITH ACTING ME DEPARTMENT HEAD CLARK JANUARY 15, AFTER FONMIN ZAWAWI HAD INFORMED HIM THAT SULTAN GAVE PERMISSION FOR OCCASIONAL USE OF MASIRAH BY US MILITARY AIRCRAFT. FCO HAD RECEIVED NOTIFICATION ON MASIRAH  
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FROM BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON, THOUGH OTHER ASPECTS OF

SULTAN'S VISIT TO US COMING BY POUCH.

2. PROCEDURE HAVING BEEN CORRECTLY FOLLOWED ACCORDING TO TERMS OF UK-OMAN LEASE AGREEMENT (FOR 99 YEARS FROM 1958), WEIR SAID HMG WOULD NO DOUBT WISH TO STUDY REQUEST NOW. NEITHER OFFICIAL COULD SEE ANY POLITICAL PROBLEMS. CLARK SPOKE OF NEED TO STUDY LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, DIFFICULTIES WITH WHICH, HE SAID, HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR INABILITY TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO USG REQUEST ON AT LEAST ONE PREVIOUS OCCASION. (FYI. WE DID NOT MENTION ALTERNATIVE AIRFIELD OFFERED BY OMANIS AND DOUBT OMANIS HAVE EITHER.) NEXT STEP WILL LIKELY BE REQUEST TO USG FOR CLARIFICATION OF USES IT DESIRES. WEIR SUGGESTED THAT, SHOULD PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SOME SORT OF AD HOC NOTIFICATION (MILITARY TO MILITARY) MAY BE REQUIRED. (COMMENT: WE NOTE MASIRAH IS ON LIST OF AIR BASES WHERE AD HOC ADVANCE NOTICE WAS REQUIRED EVEN UNDER US-UK CHIEFS OF STAFF AGREEMENT OF NOVEMBER 7, 1949, WHICH MAY NO LONGER BE APPLICABLE.)

3. ON ASSUMPTION THAT BRITISH HAVE BEEN BRIEFED ON THIS ASPECT IN WASHINGTON, AND WILL SEE MILITARY EQUIPMENT SHORTLY AFTER IT ARRIVES IN OMAN ANYWAY, WE TOLD WEIR OF SHIPMENT DUE TO ARRIVE IN OMAN "SHORTLY," MADE UP PRIMARILY OF TOW MISSILES AND LAUNCHERS. WE ALSO TOLD WEIR TWO US TECHNICIANS COMING TO INSTRUCT OMANIS IN TOW USE. WEIR ASKED IF THIS DECISION MADE SOME TIME AGO, TO WHICH WE REPLIED IN NEGATIVE. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THERE HAD BEEN AN UNDERSTANDING WITH US TO CONSULT IN ADVANCE ON SALES OF LARGER MILITARY ITEMS OF THIS SORT. WE SAID MATTER HAD COME UP ON SPUR OF THE MOMENT, IN CONNECTION WITH HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS SULTAN HAD IN WASHINGTON, WHICH DID NOT PERMIT SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ADVANCE CONSULTATION. WE ASSUMED BRITISH SAW NO PROBLEMS WITH TOW. WEIR LET THE MATTER DROP (BUT WE MAY HEAR OF IT LATER).

4. COMMENT: BRITISH HAVE MORE ENCOMPASSING ROLE IN OMAN, WHERE BRITISH OFFICERS COMMAND MILITARY FORCES ACTUALLY ENGAGED IN WAR, THAN IN OTHER GULF NATIONS FORMERLY UNDER BRITISH PROTECTION. PROVISION OF US MILITARY  
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EQUIPMENT IS VIEWED BY BRITISH AS SENSITIVE MATTER FROM SECURITY/POLITICAL AS WELL AS PURELY COMMERCIAL POINTS OF VIEW. WE SHOULD THEREFORE COORDINATE FURTHER MOVES ALONG THIS LINE (SUCH AS DOD STUDY MISSION PROPOSED FOR NEAR FUTURE) VERY CAREFULLY BOTH IN LONDON AND ON THE SPOT IN OMAN. CONSULTATION PROCESS WILL OF COURSE BE COMPLICATED BY OMANI FEARS OF APPEARING SUBORDINATE TO THE BRITISH. SPIERS

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